**SLSA EDI Subcommittee meeting (minutes)**

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| Date | 12 April 2021 |
| Venue | Zoom |
| Present | Colin Moore (CM)Diamond Ashiagbor (DA)Phillip Bremner (PB)Simon Flacks (SM)Jess Mant (JM)Clare Williams (CW) |
| Apologies | John HarringtonFlora Renz |

**Points of Action from meeting:**

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| To be done by: | Task: | Due date: |
| CW | Draft and circulate membership freeze policy to EDI subcommittee in time for checking/feedback and to circulate to SLSA Exec by 29th April in advance of the full Board meeting on 13th May 2021 | 20th April 2021 |
| DA | To redraft questions 15 and 16 etc of the membership survey to reflect the discussion and the full myriad of contract permutations in HE currently | Ongoing |

**Agenda:**

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| Membership Freeze policy | CW talked through the current proposal, that we should * put a notice on the website to the effect that membership can be frozen under certain circumstances by contacting the membership secretary.
* A membership freeze policy can be drafted to go on the website, and
* Section 9 of the Constitution (membership) amended in due course to reflect the changes.

The terms of freezing membership were set out to include flexibility.CM reminded the board why we needed this policy (that a member had requested a pause in their membership and that SLS allows this)PB noted that there was no financial gain from freezing membershipThere was a discussion around whether changes in economic status should be included as a possible reason for suspension, or whether broad scope should be left to the membership secretary to determine when membership can be frozen. The consensus was that this clause should be left in to give the membership secretary the broadest possible discretion.CW noted that whether certain clauses regarding changes in economic status constitute a reason for freezing membership might be more of an issue for the SLSA Exec when it considers any constitutional changesThere was a discussion about what members can and can’t do whilst their membership is frozen, including whether they could continue to attend the conference at the membership rate and submit books and articles for prizes.Ultimately, as membership is not required for submission to the prizes, and trustees do not need to be members, there does not appear to any problems freezing eligibility for application to prizes etc.Thus, when membership is frozen, members will continue to receive newsletters and be able to log in to their SLSA online account.PB: if the reasons for suspension are flexible and broad then the consequences should be correspondingly strict. It will also be difficult to police the book discount that the SLSA has negotiated with publishers.JM: the discounts are publicly advertised anyway so are not a members only privilege. So, once membership is frozen, members will receive the SLSA newsletter and can continue to log in to the SLSA website.CW: to draft policy and circulate to the subcommittee CM: a ban on retrospective suspension is fine in principle but discretion could be helpful in practice.CM: use of the word “suspension” has disciplinary overtonesJM: could we use the word “freeze” instead?General discussion about whether the maximum of 12 months had to be set in stone or whether this could also be flexible, and that this should be included in the wording. PoA: CW to finalise policy and circulate to EDI subcommittee in time for review and circulation to SLSA Exec by 29th April for discussion with full Exec on 13th May 2021. |
| Data selection for CRM | 5 categories of data that we can collect via the CRM (database) about our membersDA: the idea was to get something quite brief online about membership identity characteristics, deriving from the need to hold certain data about our members. So the five categories of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and contract status were proposed. However, we do not know what is possible and how much it would cost. For example, could we have multiple choice answers to this or binary responses, meaning that the data we were able to collect could have more or less use.CM: We also need to be mindful of the data we have to store and how much we actually collect.DA: the membership survey will tell us about the people who define themselves as members of the socio leal community in the UK and might give us more of an insight in terms of detailed data about our members.Should we grasp the nettle about doing something really complicated with the membership database when in fact we can collect this information through the survey?The harder questions with the more complex answers could be shifted to the survey which could be repeated every few years.JM: agreed, echoing that this is an approach she is taking with research into legal aid and will be repeated every three years. DA: Five questions on a database is unsatisfactory, and the survey is anonymous so we might get more candid responses. There was a consensus that the membership survey might be a more suitable vehicle for collecting the complexity of data that we need about our members to be able to better represent them.PoA: No further action is planned on the CRM data collection plan owing to the lack of detail and costs involved. Instead, the SLSA will collect data through a more detailed online survey which will be repeated at intervals. Update SLSA Exec to this effect.The discussion moved on to the survey…. |
| Membership survey | Paper or electronic? CM: electronic survey using software provided by Uni of Essex.JM: Is there a way of consolidating questions to grid answers?CM: Agreed with DA to remove the section on institutionsPB: The grid idea would let us reduce the number of questions, so there would be a list of questions with a grid of answers that apply to each of the questions, making the survey easier and quicker to completeGeneral consensus to lose the middle section of the survey about you at your institution (questions 20-26) which would leave the section about the respondent, and then the respondent as a socio-legal scholar. CM: these questions could be left for a separate piece of research across legal academia across non-socio legal academicsDA: we might ask the ALT and SLS to come in with us on something like that, but maybe a plan to be concretised in the futureCW: are we adding in a question about people’s hopes for getting a contract/employment in HE?General consensus that we should include a question about hopes for better employment conditions in HEThere was a detailed discussion over how we phrase and intersect the myriad variations of contracts that exist in HE which became complicated given the extensive variationsDA: We should use the phrase “primarily” or “focused” to cover the variations in contractual terms across the sectorCM: We could use the terms “academic research focused” or “academic teaching focused”PB: We need to remove “tick all that apply” otherwise people will tick all the boxesDA: Offered to have a go at a draft of questions 15 and 16 to capture student/employed and then the types of contracts they are on, and this will be circulated CM: Aim is to provide the SLSA Exec with a status update on 13th May. Once we have the updated list, CM to email ethics at Essex to update the approval. General consensus to launch survey in September and publicise to members.JM: we can publicise the survey on Twitter and even write a blog post about it to get as high a response as possible.DA: the membership database appears to be fairly basic: where is the directory of members?CM: this disappeared a while agoGeneral consensus that the online membership database should be left as is, without additional data, unless and until we can collate the data in the detail necessary.CM: a directory of members might be a useful addition to the websitePoA: DA to draft questions 15+16 on contract status and aspiration in HE and circulate this to EDI subcommittee for further discussion and for further input on the disability categories. |
| AOB | Note about whether we need to update policies in the light of some conflict at the conference where there is a clash of views/offensive opinions aired. This is something the full SLSA Exec board might want to address.This is a really important point in the light of moving to online conferences and the fact that people can tend to be more forthright online. What actions can the SLSA take in response to offensive language or actions?Guidance on how to diffuse a situation might be helpful. CM suggested training videos or training on how to diffuse a situation and empower the chair to deal with the situation. |